DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 420 829 CG 028 554

TITLE	Illegal Drugs: What Should We Do Now? An Issue Book.
INSTITUTION	National Issues Forums, Dayton, OH.; Public Agenda Foundation, New York, NY.
SPONS AGENCY	Charles F. Kettering Foundation, Dayton, OH.
ISBN	ISBN-0-7872-3738-8
PUB DATE	1997-00-00
NOTE	32p.; Charts/figures may not reproduce clearly.
AVAILABLE FROM	Kendall/Hunt, 4050 Westmark Drive, Dubuque, IA 52002; toll-free phone: 800-228-0810.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Drug Abuse; *Illegal Drug Use; Law Enforcement; *Policy; *Prevention; Public Opinion
IDENTIFIERS	United States

ABSTRACT

Increasing frustration with the illegal drug problem is fueling public discussion about the effectiveness of the nation's antidrug efforts. This document offers three choices for dealing with the drug abuse problem in the Untied States. Each choice presents "what can be done" and information "in support" and "in opposition" (choices are illustrated with multiple graphs, charts, and figures). Choice 1: "Step Up Enforcement to Finish the Job." This choice points out the effects of enforcing existing antidrug laws and proposes redoubling current efforts to keep drugs out of homes, schools, workplaces and neighborhoods. Choice 2: "Change Attitudes About Illegal Drugs." This choice assumes that government cannot significantly reduce the supply of illegal drugs, thus demand must be reduced by changing tolerant behaviors. Choice 3: "Treat Substance Abuse as an Illness." This choice approaches drug abuse as a treatable illness and illegal drugs as primarily a public health problem, therefore requiring medical, social, and legal remedies. The document concludes with a summary that addresses renovating public policy and ballots for readers to register their views. (MKA).

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NATIONAL ISSUES FORUMS

Illegal Drugs

What Should We Do Now?

ED 420 829

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Illegal Drugs
What Should We Do Now?

By Michael deCourcy Hinds

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One in two Americans has a drug problem or knows someone who does. And now, after declining for years, teenage drug use – mostly of marijuana – has doubled since 1992. Increasing frustration with the illegal drug problem is fueling public discussions about the effectiveness of the nation's antidrug efforts.

Option 1 Step Up Enforcement to Finish the Job 6

The nation's war on drugs has already reduced casual drug use by 53 percent since 1979. Now is not the time to second-guess success, but rather, to redouble our efforts to keep drugs out of the country and out of our homes, schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods.

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Since government cannot significantly reduce the supply of illegal drugs, we must reduce the demand for them – by changing tolerant attitudes. Parents, schools, and the entertainment media must say, with one voice, that illegal drugs are dangerous and socially unacceptable.

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Option 3 Treat Substance Abuse as an Illness 16

Drug abuse is a treatable illness, and illegal drugs are primarily a public health problem, demanding medical, social, and legal remedies. Government must jail drug traffickers, but should treat drug users. Prevention programs should be expanded to reach more troubled families before they turn to drugs.

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Illegal Drugs

What Should We Do Now?

Black Star

After declining for a dozen years, marijuana use among teenagers has doubled since 1992.

A California factory worker uses amphetamines to stay alert during the overnight shift. An Ohio teenager plays the harmonica stoned on marijuana. A New York stockbroker – married, with two small children – experiments with heroin and dies of an overdose. Illegal drugs have become so enmeshed in American life that one out of two Americans say they have a drug problem or know someone who does. Illegal drugs are no longer somebody else's issue, they are everyone's.

Marijuana use among teenagers has doubled since 1992, against a national backdrop of stability in illegal drug use, a 1996 government survey reported. Experts speculate that more teenagers are smoking marijuana and trying LSD because they think drugs provide more pleasure than risk. "I smoke pot because it feels good... Duhhh," Mary, 16, told *The Philadelphia Inquirer* shortly after the government survey was released.

Not surprisingly, the government report stirred up public discussion about the effectiveness of the nation's war on drugs. More than ever, Americans see the issue as one in which they themselves have to take a more active part – a problem too big for government alone to solve. Public discussion is evolving, in part, because so many people have now had personal experience with illegal drugs, and in part, because so many people are terrified by the random violence associated with drug-related crimes.

One measure of public concern about drug policy is that some states voted in 1996 to try a whole new approach. In Arizona, 65 percent of voters approved the medicinal use of marijuana, heroin, LSD, and methamphetamines if there is a scientific basis for doctors to prescribe these drugs. Under Arizona's Drug Medicalization, Prevention and Control Act, use of these drugs without a prescription remains a crime, but first- and second-time offenders convicted of personal possession will be placed in mandatory treatment and probation as an alternative to prison. Supporters of the measure included former U.S. Secretary of State George P. Shultz, former U.S. Senators Barry Goldwater and Alan Cranston, and Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman. Opponents included Barry R. McCaffrey, director of the U.S. Office of National Drug Control Policy, and U.S. Senators Orrin G. Hatch and Jon Kyl.

Voters in California also approved a ballot initiative – endorsed by the California Medical Association – that permits any citizen to cultivate or use marijuana for medicinal purposes on a doctor's verbal recommendation.

This issue book first outlines the nation's problem with illegal drugs and, in subsequent sections, presents three approaches for addressing the problem.

The Drug Problem Isn't New

Use of illegal drugs is linked to crime, AIDS, workplace injuries, failure in school, unemployment, domestic violence, and the disintegration of families and communities. Drug abuse may seem like a quintessentially modern scourge, but it isn't. Societies have long struggled with the difficulty of drawing the line between a drug's benefits and its dangers, between its responsible use and its abuse.

After all, marijuana plants were among the prized possessions brought to Virginia by English settlers in the early 1600s. Between 1886 and 1905, Coca Cola advertised cocaine as the "remarkable therapeutic agent" found in the beverage for combatting fatigue. And for many years, Sears Roebuck sold needles and morphine through the mail. In the 1890s Bayer Pharmaceutical introduced two wonder drugs and named them aspirin and heroin, which was sold as a cough suppressant. At the turn of the century, U.S. public health officials estimated that 300,000 Americans were addicted to opiates; most were female victims of patent medicines, poor medical care, and limited options for treating pain. Until Congress began restricting drug use in 1914, druggists and general stores routinely and freely sold opium, morphine, heroin, cocaine, and marijuana.

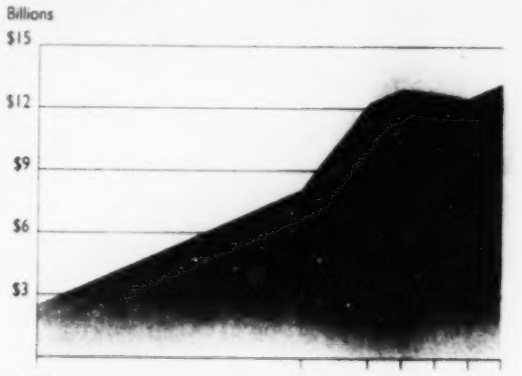
The nation's early efforts to regulate drugs were supported by organizations with very different agendas. They included medical societies concerned about quack remedies, consumer protection advocates who favored disclosure of drug products' addictive ingredients, anti-immigration groups that blamed foreigners for bringing drugs into the country, temperance societies that favored banning alcohol and other intoxicating drugs, and members of the Progressive movement, who saw drug restrictions as part of their plan for a more democratic and moral society.

Congress first imposed controls on the sale of opiates and cocaine in 1914 and, over the years, built up a sizable body of narcotics laws. In 1951 Congress set mandatory minimum prison sentences, which required courts to send drug dealers to prison for a minimum of two years for the first offense, with longer mandatory terms for second and third offenses. In 1965, Congress repealed the mandatory minimum sentences, on the grounds that they removed judicial discretion without reducing the rate of drug offenses; in 1986, Congress reversed itself again, reestablishing mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses.

Following a surge of drug use in the 1960s, President Richard M. Nixon in 1973 declared an "all-out global war" to end "the drug menace." By 1988, the nation's antidrug crusade under President Ronald Reagan cost $4.8 billion a year; by 1995, the antidrug budget had almost quadrupled, to $13.2 billion, under President Bill Clinton. The nation's war on drugs has placed top priority on enforcement of criminal laws, followed by treatment, education, and interdiction of illegal drugs at our borders. Community antidrug campaigns have also proliferated in recent years, as people around the country felt they had to get involved to protect their neighborhoods.

The Rising Cost of Combating Drugs

Federal spending on drug control, in billions of dollars, adjusted for inflation, 1981-1995



Source: U.S. Office of National Drug Control Policy

When discussing ways to shift priorities and spending, people often assume that since the antidrug budget was $13.2 billion in 1995, there is $13.2 billion on the table to spend, possibly in new ways. But much of this money is allocated for programs to which the government has made long-term commitments that cannot be stopped at the drop of a hat. Prisons must be built and run to house offenders already convicted of drug crimes; international interdiction operations by the military must be supported; and contracts with treatment programs must be carried out. Therefore, shifting priorities would require new spending – and that means raising taxes or reducing programs unrelated to illegal drugs. Community programs, however, have grown like weeds with little or no public funding.

Illegal drug use fluctuates considerably, but it is widespread. Contrary to stereotypes and criminal conviction rates, three-quarters of Americans who admit using illegal drugs are white and employed, according to the government's National Household Survey on Drug

Coca leaves/National Library of Medicine

For Further Reading/Illegal Drugs

- Rod L. Evans and Irwin M. Berent, editors, *Drug Legalization: For and Against* (Peru, Ill.: Open Court Publishing Company, 1992).
- Melvyn B. Kraus and Edward P. Lazear, editors, *Searching for Alternatives: Drug-Control Policy in the United States* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1991).
- William O. Walker, editor, *Drug Control Policy: Essays in Historical and Comparative Perspective* (University Park, Penn.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992).

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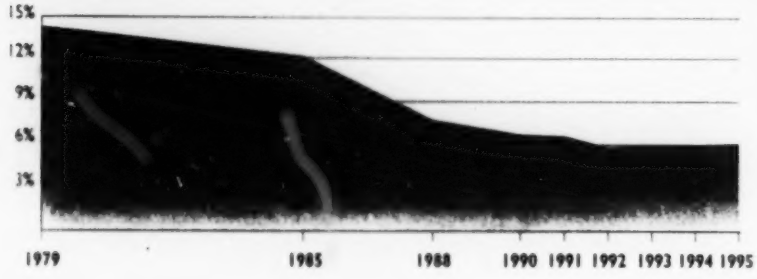
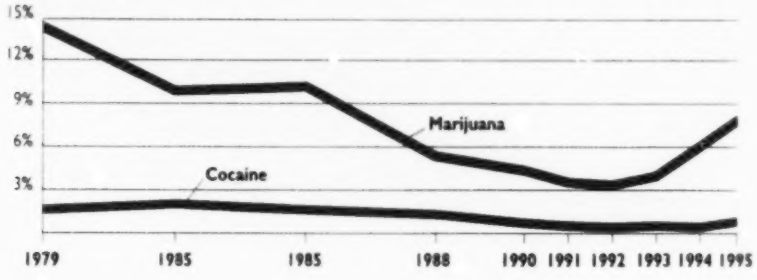
Overall Drug Use Has Fallen...

Percentage of Americans over age 12 who reported using an illegal drug in the previous month, selected years, 1979-1995



...But Teen Drug Use Is Rising Again

Percentage of children from age 12 to 17 who reported using marijuana and cocaine in the previous month, selected years, 1979-1995



Source: Department of Health and Human Services, National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, 1995

Abuse. Marijuana is America's favorite drug: 65 million have tried it and 10 million smoke it monthly. The government survey also reports:

- In 1979, illegal drug use peaked, with 25.5 million Americans, or 14 percent of the population over 12, saying they had used illegal drugs in the previous month.
- By 1992, only 11.9 million Americans reported using drugs in the previous month, a 53 percent decline from 1979. Self-reported drug use declined among all demographic groups, but drug use among young people between the ages of 12 and 25 plummeted by nearly 300 percent.
- Between 1992 and 1995, overall illegal drug use increased slightly, but teenage drug use (mostly of marijuana) more than doubled, increasing from 5.3 percent to 10.9 percent. In the same period, illegal teenage use of alcohol and tobacco remained flat, with just over 20 percent of adolescents drinking and smoking.

Substance Abuse

This issue book is about illegal drugs, but discussion of illegal drugs inevitably touches on the broader topic of substance abuse, which includes the abuse of legal drugs like alcohol, tobacco, and prescription drugs like Valium and codeine.

By some measures, alcohol and tobacco are more costly and kill more people than do illegal drugs. For example, annual healthcare costs and lost productivity due to substance abuse amount to $67 billion for illegal drugs, $72 billion for tobacco, and $100 billion for alcohol, according to a 1993 study at Brandeis University. Alcohol- and tobacco-related diseases and accidents kill about 600,000 people a year, about 20 times more people than die from drug-related crimes, overdoses, and diseases. The numbers give a glimpse of the problems' costs, but interpreting the numbers demands caution: alcohol and tobacco are legally sold and freely used, while illegal drugs are not.

Crime sets illegal drugs apart from legal drugs. Alcohol has a strong statistical link to some violent crimes, but alcohol's link to crime in general is weaker than that of illegal drugs. According to inmate surveys conducted in 1987 by the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, nearly 40 percent of incarcerated youths said they were under the influence of illegal drugs at the time of their offense. In 1991, 17 percent of all state prison inmates said they committed their offense to buy illegal drugs, and a third said they committed their crime under the influence of illegal drugs.

Because of the strong link between crime and illegal drug use, many people see the nation's drug problem primarily as a criminal problem. But others say that illegal drug use represents a failure by parents, schools, and our popular culture to educate people about destructive drug use and to stigmatize illegal drugs as socially unacceptable. Still others say that drug abuse is a treatable disease, and that the widespread use of illegal drugs is primarily a public health problem, one that will grow worse without adequate programs for treating and preventing substance abuse.

Where Do We Go From Here?

In deciding how to address the drug problem, Americans confront some tough questions, including the following:

- To fight illegal drugs, are we willing to expand the use of strategies like wiretapping and random drug testing?
- Should we put drug users in prison or in treatment – or both?

■ Are the entertainment media glamorizing drug use or merely reflecting society?

A Framework for Discussion

To promote discussion about the illegal drug problem, this issue book presents three perspectives, or choices, concerning the direction the nation might take:

Choice One says the nation's antidrug efforts over the past 20 years have cut drug use by half. This is the time to expand successful programs, not experiment with new ones. In this view, we must continue to make drug enforcement a top national priority, increasing efforts to attack drug use and trafficking at the community, national, and international levels.

Choice Two says we must continue enforcing drug laws, but the nation must expand educational efforts to reduce the public appetite for illegal drugs. Parents, schools, and the entertainment media must take much stronger stands against illegal drug use. We must make it clear that illegal drugs are destructive and socially unacceptable.

Choice Three says drug abuse is a treatable illness. The epidemic of illegal drug abuse, in this view, is best addressed with a broad public health approach, including an expansion of prevention and treatment programs as well as legal reforms. Government must jail drug dealers, but treat drug abusers as sick patients and help troubled families deal with problems that put them at risk of drug abuse.

A note to the reader about NIF books

Each book in this series for the National Issues Forums outlines an issue and several approaches, or choices, that address a problem and its solution. Rather than conforming to any single public proposal, each choice reflects widely held, but contrasting, concerns and principles. Panels of experts review manuscripts to make sure the choices are presented accurately and fairly.

Unlike most periodicals, issue books do not identify individuals or organizations with partisan labels such as Democrat, Republican, conservative, or liberal. The goal is to present ideas in a fresh way that encourages readers to judge them on their merit. Issue books include quotations from experts and public officials when their views appear consistent with the principles of a choice. But these quoted individuals might not endorse every aspect of a choice as it is described here.

A Century of Drug Use and Drug Policy

American opium smokers, late 1800s

1900 U.S. public health officials estimate that 300,000 Americans are opiate addicts. Opium, morphine, and cocaine are commonly used in health remedies, and legally sold even in grocery stores.

1914 The nation's first antidrug law, the Harrison Act, requires doctors and pharmacists to register prescriptions for cocaine and opiates. Other use of narcotics becomes illegal.

Opium poppy

1922 Congress enacts the Narcotic Drugs Import and Export Act to monitor illicit traffic in narcotics.

1923 Congress outlaws heroin.

1930 Federal Bureau of Narcotics, the forerunner to the Drug Enforcement Administration, is created.

1937 Congress outlaws marijuana.

1951 Congress passes the Boggs law, which establishes uniform penalties for violations of drug laws. A first conviction results in a mandatory minimum sentence of two years; a second conviction, 5 to 10 years; a third conviction, 10 to 20 years.

1973 President Richard M. Nixon declares an "all-out global war" on drugs.

1974 Cocaine makes a comeback as a popular euphoric, and is embraced by the media. A *New York Times Magazine* piece, "Cocaine: The Champagne of Drugs," states, "For its devotees, cocaine epitomizes the best of the drug culture – which is to say, a good high achieved without the forbiddingly dangerous needle and addiction of heroin."

Cocaine toothache drops

1975 A presidential task force recommends shifting the emphasis of federal drug policy from law enforcement to treatment and prevention, noting that "total elimination of drug abuse is unlikely."

1977 Testifying before Congress, officials from four government agencies recommend eliminating criminal penalties for the use of marijuana. The federal government takes no action, but 10 states decriminalize the possession of small amounts of marijuana.

1978 President Jimmy Carter asks Congress to abolish all federal criminal penalties for possession of less than one ounce of marijuana.

1980 President Ronald Reagan increases funding for the war on drugs, and First Lady Nancy Reagan launches the "Just Say No" campaign.

1981 U.S. Representative Newt Gingrich, now Speaker of the House, proposes legislation to legalize marijuana for medical purposes.

The military begins random drug testing of enlisted personnel.

1986 Congress allows the use of military for intelligence-gathering in the war on drugs, imposes mandatory life sentences on adults who sell drugs to a juvenile for the second time, and permits the introduction of illegally seized evidence in drug offense trials.

1988 Congress creates a "drug czar" to coordinate drug control strategies as head of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, and makes drug offenders ineligible for college loans or public housing.

1996 Voters in California and Arizona approve ballot initiatives that legalize the medical use of marijuana.

Photos: National Library of Medicine

Step Up Enforcement to Finish the Job

Black Star

Enforcement of antidrug laws has helped reduce drug use by 53% since 1979.

Nearly 70 percent of the cocaine sold on American streets comes from drug cartels in Cali, Colombia. Organized Mexican gangs help transport the cocaine, with a street value of $6,000 per pound, across the U.S. border in secret compartments of thousands of vehicles.

The operators of this network are "a new breed of international organized criminals whose power and influence make America's mafia look like child's play," Thomas A. Constantine, administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration, told Congress in June 1996.

Constantine was testifying about a just-completed investigation documenting the domination of the U.S. drug trade by Colombian and Mexican wholesalers, who, in turn, supply American drug dealers on the street. By the end of the eight-month investigation in May 1996, police had arrested 156 people, and had seized six tons of cocaine and $17 million in drug profits. The international investigation, dubbed Operation Zorro II, serves as a model of cooperation, involving law enforcement officials from 11 federal agencies and 42 state and local agencies.

Illegal drugs, by definition, are a criminal problem, one that will only worsen without a commitment to substantially increase enforcement, according to Choice One supporters. In this view, a tough, uncompromising response to the illegal drug problem is required because Americans are deeply concerned that drugs are destructive to individuals and threaten our entire way of life. Government statistics indicate that our antidrug efforts over the past 20 years have produced significant success: more than a 50 percent drop in the number of people in every age group who try drugs or use them casually. But current levels of enforcement and existing community antidrug campaigns are not nearly enough. How else can one explain the vast quantities of drugs that daily slip into this country in cars driven by noncitizens? How else can one explain the public sale of drugs on American streets everywhere? And how else can one explain the proliferation of crack houses, where everyone, including the police, knows that cocaine is sold to a traffic jam of addicts?

A Role for Everyone

Choice One supporters say that Americans must make drug eradication a top national priority, with innovative strategies to break every link in the chain of drug production and distribution at the international, national, and community levels.

Internationally, the U.S. should increase economic assistance to help other governments eradicate drugs from their farms, factories, and economies. U.S. military forces should cooperate with foreign governments in destroying the drug factories and prosecuting the drug lords. As a last resort – especially when a foreign government has been corrupted by drug money, as is apparently the case in Colombia – the U.S. should be willing to intervene on its own, much as it did in 1989 by removing Panama's General Manuel Noriega and imprisoning him for allowing drug traffickers to operate from his nation with impunity. The government must also seal our leaky international borders against drugs, expanding border patrols on land and sea and in the air.

On a national level, we must strengthen criminal laws so that law enforcement officials can do the job Americans want them to do. Government must significantly expand its drug enforcement efforts, putting many more police on the streets, building more prisons, and expanding the use of the National Guard and perhaps other military forces in demolishing crack houses and protecting communities. The nation must deal strictly with drug dealers and drug users alike, strengthening laws so that offenders are punished more severely and drug profits are seized.

But getting serious about eradicating drugs means much more than increasing the government's role. Drugs have saturated our communities so thoroughly that we cannot expect the government alone to solve the problem – as individuals and members of community organizations, we must take responsibility for stopping drug use and sales in every community. For our own good, we must insist that schools conduct locker-room searches, that employers conduct random drug tests, and that police help communities develop neighborhood watch patrols. The nation's message must be simple and unambiguous: zero tolerance for illegal drug use.

Keep Drugs Out

The war on drugs, in this view, should not be just a federal and state responsibility but also a local effort in every American city, town, suburb, and rural area. For example, urban communities

What Can Be Done

Supporters of Choice One generally favor the following measures:

- Seal our international borders to illegal drugs and demand international cooperation in breaking up drug cartels. If necessary, impose stiff economic sanctions against drug-exporting countries. As a last resort, especially in cases where drug profits have corrupted a foreign government, use military force to destroy drug factories and cartel strongholds.
- Substantially increase funding for enforcement. Put more police on the streets, expand border patrols, and strengthen state and federal drug enforcement efforts, including surveillance and undercover programs.
- Have police help citizens develop antidrug campaigns and patrols to protect their communities.
- Expand canine sniff searches and random testing for illegal drugs to all schools and workplaces. Make public benefits like welfare and unemployment compensation contingent on passing drug tests. Encourage parents of teenagers to use newly available at-home drug tests.
- Impose mandatory minimum prison sentences on drug users and dealers – most drug offenders now serve only a third of their prison terms.
- Support the investment in effective enforcement by building more prisons.
- Destroy drug dealers' business by expanding seizures of their property and drug profits.

Jules L. Woods

C. B. Kimmins, executive director of Mantua Against Drugs, leading one of many citizens' patrols that keep drug dealers and addicts out of the Mantua section of Philadelphia.

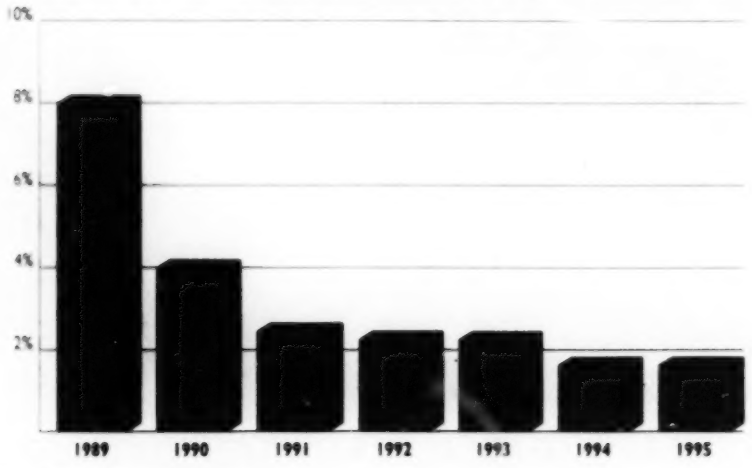
that have succeeded in fighting drugs often combine two strategies: 1) antidrug campaigns, in which citizens make it clear that they will not tolerate drug dealing in their neighborhood; and 2) community policing, which generally involves a municipality assigning more police to foot patrols, regular beats, and community meetings. In Philadelphia, where the police work side by side with community group members, the crime rate declined by 20 percent between 1989 and 1993. In one formerly drug-infested neighborhood called Mantua, the combined strategy resulted in a whopping 40 percent decrease in crime during those years. Leading the community effort is a citizen's group called Mantua Against Drugs. MAD, as it's called, has become a national model for citizen involvement in the war on drugs.

Wearing white construction helmets and armed only with bullhorns, the mostly elderly men and women of MAD occupy street corners and block off access to tenements where drug dealers operate. "We get neighbors to know it's their responsibility to take the lead in this," said C.B. Kimmins, MAD's executive director. "We get in the drug dealers' faces, telling them to get out of the neighborhood. We're not vigilantes, but we don't back down." Working with police, MAD has closed down more crack houses than its members can count.

Testing for Illegal Drugs Deters Their Use

The Workplace: Testing has increased since 1989

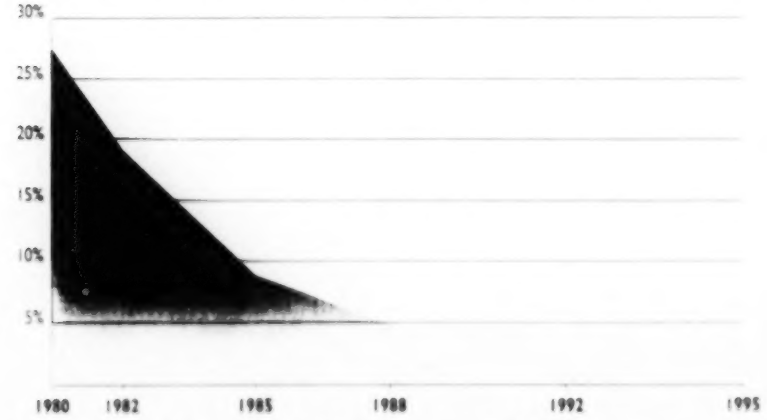
Percentage of employees testing positive at firms that test for illegal drugs, 1989–1995



Source: American Management Association

The Military: Testing began in 1981

Percentage of armed forces enlisted personnel reporting drug use in the previous month, 1980–1995



Source: 1995 Department of Defense Survey of Health Related Behavior Among Military Personnel

Make Sure Dealing Drugs Doesn't Pay

Too often, drug dealers are back on the street the day after they are arrested. And when they are sent to prison, they usually keep their illegal drug profits and often serve only a portion of their sentence. To deter drug trafficking, government must ensure that drug dealing is a losing, dead-end business, in this view.

Mandatory minimum sentences, which specify the minimum period of incarceration for some crimes, should be applied to all drug-related crimes – and the minimum sentences should be lengthened to make prison a more effective deterrent.

Seizing drug profits is another way to deter these crimes, as well as a way to offset some enforcement costs. In 1995, for example, federal prosecutors seized more than $150 million in drug profits from Swiss bank accounts of a single Colombian family, the Nassers, who had exported an estimated 27 tons of cocaine and 1,500 tons of marijuana to the U.S. since 1976. Since the late 1980s, U.S. seizures of drug traffickers' assets have averaged $600 million annually, according to government statistics.

Choice One supports city and state efforts to make greater use of seizure and forfeiture laws at the local level. In Detroit, for example, police seize the automobiles of drivers who cruise through neighborhoods to buy drugs. To redeem their vehicles, drivers have to pay $950; the program generated more than $630,000 in 1995 and chased drug buyers out of city neighborhoods – now only 1 in 100 seized vehicles is owned by a repeat offender.

Don't Tolerate Illegal Drugs Anywhere

If this country is to eradicate illegal drugs, Americans must stop tolerating any illegal drug use and must, for the good of all, accept some minor inconveniences.

In 1996, for example, Debbie Sandland, a trustee of the Simi Valley School District in Ventura County, California, cast one of the few votes against having police dogs conduct random "sniff-searches" of students' lockers. Sandland expressed concern about disrupting student privacy, but was overruled by a majority of board members – and, as it turned out, by two out of three students in a survey following six searches. "Seeing the feedback makes me feel a lot better," Sandland told *The Los Angeles Times*. "It has not been nearly as disruptive as I thought."

The workplace provides another major opportunity to combat drugs, as 74 percent of the nation's 12 million drug users are employed – and nearly 2 million of them use drugs on the job, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Surveys of employees indicate overwhelming support for random drug tests of urine samples, and employers are rapidly recognizing their obligation to provide drug-free workplaces – especially as they realize that employee drug use causes accidents, lost productivity, and higher healthcare costs.

> "I have seen hundreds of drug abusers who have recovered control over their lives because their employers put their employment on the line."

Employer drug testing is highly effective, according to Dr. Robert L. DuPont, president of the Institute for Behavior and Health in Rockville, Maryland. "I have seen hundreds of drug abusers who have recovered control over their lives because their employers put their employment on the line," he says.

Department of the Treasury

Eliminating the drug problem involves eliminating the drug business – by stepping up enforcement and stripping dealers of their drug profits.

The most powerful success story comes from the military, which began random drug testing after a Navy jet crashed on the deck of the aircraft carrier Nimitz in 1981, killing 14 sailors and pilots; autopsies indicated recent marijuana use by 6 of the 14 men. Today, the military services say they are becoming drug-free. A Department of Defense survey in 1995 indicated that only 3 percent of all military personnel had used drugs in the prior month – or about one-third the rate for civilians of the same ages. By comparison, a 1980 survey indicated that 26.7 percent of military personnel were using drugs. The military's policy for every enlisted member and officer is zero tolerance for illegal drugs; if drug use persists after warnings and treatment, offenders are discharged from the service.

Drug Use Often Leads to Crime

Percentage of inmates who said they committed crime to get money for drugs, by prison system and most serious current offense

Crime committed	Federal prisoners 1991	State prisoners 1991	County/city jail inmates 1989
Robbery	27%	27%	32%
Burglary	32%	30%	31%
Larceny/theft	13%	31%	28%
Drug trafficking	10%	25%	9%

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics

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In Support

Illegal drugs are destroying the country and can no longer be tolerated.

The war on drugs has been very successful, reducing casual drug use by more than 50 percent since 1979. But winning the war on drugs will require adequate funding and a strong commitment from government, businesses, schools, communities, and citizens.

If the nation curtails the supply of drugs, people won't be able to sell them, use them, or abuse them.

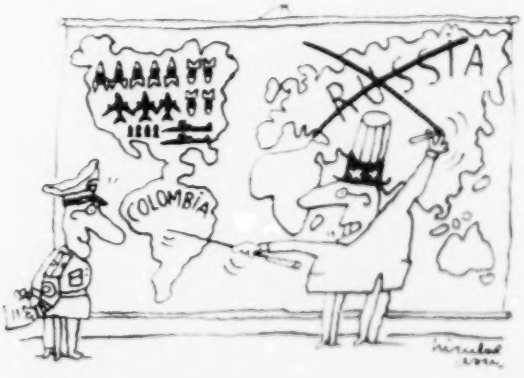
Cracking down on drugs will reduce crime, because a significant number of people commit crimes to support their drug habit, and a third of all crimes are committed under the influence of drugs.

If would-be drug dealers know they will be punished severely and stripped of property and profits, they will look for another business venture. Drug users must also know that illegal drug use will result in swift, certain punishment and long prison sentences.

Incarceration works. Studies show statistical relationships between rising prison populations and falling crime rates, with significant reductions in the number of burglaries, robberies, assaults, and rapes.

Deterrent measures such as canine sniff searches and random drug testing for illegal drugs are very effective, as the military has proven.

Since most of the drugs sold on American streets come from abroad, we must do everything possible to seal our borders and force drug-exporting nations to curtail their drug trade.



In Opposition

Choice One supports spending more money trying to reduce the supply of illegal drugs. But government reports indicate that despite spending many billions of dollars, the U.S. intercepts only about 5 percent of drug shipments coming into the country.

This approach calls for zero tolerance of illegal drug use. But the nation can't possibly lock up everyone, including children, who experiments with drugs. Drug users need counseling and treatment, not punishment.

Most crime linked to drugs results from the illegality of drugs, just as the illegality of alcohol during Prohibition – not alcohol use itself – created a major crime wave.

Choice One treats marijuana as though it were as dangerous as heroin, but research indicates that marijuana is a nonaddictive drug that is safer than alcohol. Ten states – including Maine, Minnesota, and Ohio – have already eliminated criminal penalties for possession of marijuana for personal use.

This choice calls for strategies like random drug testing, which invades privacy, and asset forfeiture, which violates civil liberties by forcing people to prove that their property was *not* used in committing a crime.

Locking up drug users isn't the answer. Public officials in many states say that, without substantial tax increases, they cannot continue providing prison cells for all nonviolent drug users.

Some opponents say Choice One fails because it puts the cart before the horse: it tries to change people's behavior before changing their attitudes about illegal drugs.

For Further Reading
Step Up Enforcement to Finish the Job

- Vincent T. Bugliosi, *The Phoenix Solution: Getting Serious About Winning America's Drug War* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Dove Books, 1996).
- John Dilulio, Jr., "The Next War on Drugs," *The Brookings Review*, The Brookings Institution, June 1, 1993.
- Robert L. DuPont, Jr., M.D., *Getting Tough on Gateway Drugs: A Guide for the Family* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Press, Inc., 1984); *The Selfish Brain: Learning From Addiction* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Press, Inc., 1996).

Change Attitudes About Illegal Drugs

Terry Mill Elementary

Damon Mitchum, a sixth grader, says he's learned too much about illegal drugs to ever use them.

Nothing is more powerful than a person's attitudes in determining his or her behavior. And no strategy for curbing illegal drug use is more promising than a nationwide effort to change tolerant public attitudes about illegal drugs, according to Choice Two.

Take cigarette smoking. Thanks to the power of education and the dominance of antismoking messages across American culture, 15 million fewer Americans smoke today than did in 1985. As people learned the health and addictive risks of smoking, their concerns crystallized into a mass movement that has branded smoking as destructive and socially unacceptable. That message is expressed everywhere, including the media, shopping malls, the workplace, and schools.

"You don't have to smoke to be cool, you can be cool for just who you are," says Damon Mitchum, a sixth-grader at Terry Mill Elementary School in DeKalb County, Georgia. In school, he has studied why people smoke and what it does to them. "I won't ever try it," he says emphatically.

Damon has the same attitude about alcohol and illegal drugs, too, thanks to Terry Mill's award-winning programs on substance abuse. The programs involve hundreds of community members as role models, mentors, and teachers. But schools alone can't turn around the drug problem, says Terry Mill's principal, Shirley C. Reams, whose educational work has been honored at the White House. She said the school's efforts are undermined by what Damon and other students see on television, in movies, and in magazines, where illegal drugs are portrayed as a part of life, if not actually glamorized. "It's a mean world," says Reams.

It's the Right Thing to Do

As a society, Americans take pride in their willingness to work together on something just because it's the right thing to do. With regard to illegal drugs, American society has not yet mobilized to counter this scourge. Government must continue antidrug enforcement efforts at their current level, but the nation must do much more to curb the appetite for illegal drugs. In homes, workplaces, communities, and

What Can Be Done

Supporters of Choice Two generally favor the following measures:

- Use every means possible to impress upon parents the need for them to talk frequently with their children about the problem of illegal drugs.
- Make antidrug education a top priority in schools, and expand curricula and teaching methods that have been proven effective.
- Encourage the media to reaffirm antidrug messages and stop undermining them with programming that glamorizes drug use. To accomplish this, use every persuasive strategy, including letter-writing campaigns to media organizations, boycotts of advertised products, and, where appropriate, regulations.
- Stigmatize drug use as a socially unacceptable, destructive habit.
- Promote antidrug education as a nationwide and community-wide effort, involving every citizen and requiring leadership from every business, civic, school, and religious organization. In every place, and with one voice, America must say no to drugs.

"I've been asked to try drugs and I say no. If I was ever using drugs and my mom found out, it would be all over for me, because she's very strict."

throughout our culture, Americans must attack illegal drugs with a unified message – that they are destructive and socially unacceptable. To do this, we must expand antidrug education programs and promote antidrug messages in the entertainment media. Advocating this approach, Reams says, "We need to have the media, the schools, the churches, the community, the businesses, the government – everyone – working together on this. We have the resources to do it, let's just do it."

Choice Two supporters say no enforcement effort, no matter how vigorous, can stop illegal drugs when public tolerance for casual drug use is growing in our culture. Many schools offer antidrug educational programs, and antidrug messages pop up in the media – but these efforts are vastly inadequate, in this view, merely paying lip service to the problem. Choice Two calls for a massive expansion of educational programs by parents, schools, and community organizations. In addition, we need a society-wide campaign to stigmatize drug users as social pariahs.

Among other things, Americans should boycott films, fashion designers, and TV programs that glamorize illegal drugs. TV networks should be pressured to run far more antidrug messages, such as the ads produced by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, a nonprofit organization. One of its more memorable TV ads shows an egg frying while a narrator says: "This is your brain ... This is drugs ... This is your brain on drugs."

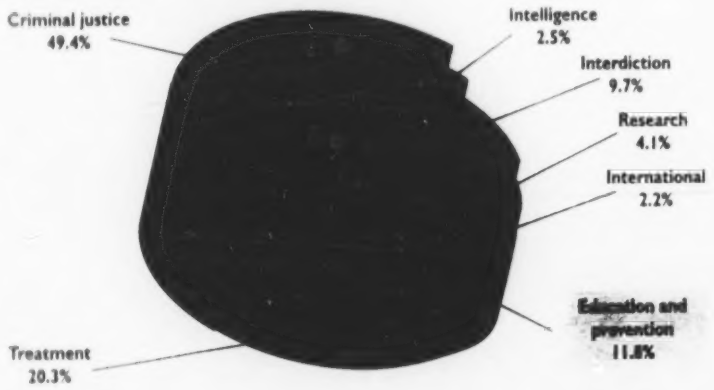
Early Lessons Last a Lifetime

The best way to reduce substance abuse is to prevent early experimentation. And the best places to start the educational process are at home and in school, in this view.

Consider the scope of children's drug use. More than a third of all eighth-graders have used an illegal drug, as have nearly half of all 12th-graders, according to the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency and Prevention. The critical importance of preventing early drug use is demonstrated by research that has found that people who pass age 21 without using illegal drugs almost certainly will never use them.

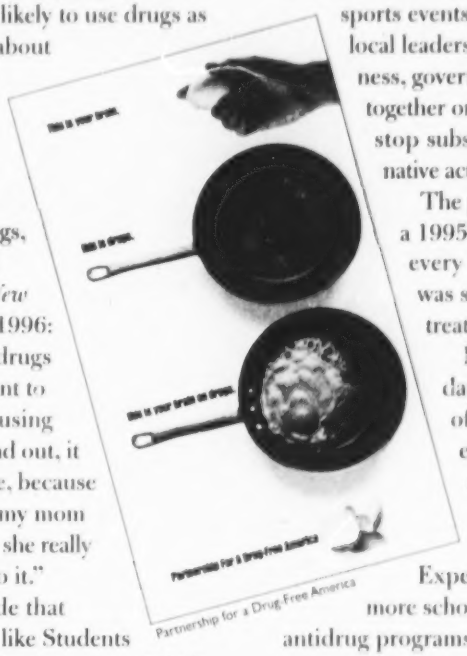
Drug Abuse Education and Prevention: A small slice of the federal pie

Federal spending on drug education and prevention programs, as a percentage of the $13.2 billion drug control budget, 1995



Source: U.S. Office of National Drug Control Policy

Drug education must start at home, in this view. Studies show that teenagers who have learned about the risks of illegal drugs from their parents are half as likely to use drugs as those who didn't learn about drugs at home. Parents need to be strict, but they also need to express the love that's behind their concern about children using drugs, as Daren, a 15-year-old boy, explained to *The New York Times* in October 1996: "I've been asked to try drugs and I say no. I don't want to start that. If I was ever using drugs and my mom found out, it would be all over for me, because she's very strict. When my mom talks to me about drugs, she really puts a lot of emotion into it."



At left: Antidrug advertising campaigns, like this one from the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, can make kids more aware of the dangers of drugs.

Studies also conclude that some school programs, like Students Taught Awareness and Resistance, or STAR, reduce the use of alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs like marijuana and cocaine by 20 to 50 percent – and reduce the likelihood of participants' using drugs in the future. STAR works because it provides students with essential information about illegal drugs and teaches the social skills needed to resist them. Among other things, this program:

- Provides students with accurate and relevant information about illegal drugs and their effects;
- Helps teenagers identify cultural pressures to use drugs;
- Reduces peer pressure, in part, by stressing that 9 out of 10 teenagers don't use drugs on a regular basis, and that about 8 out of 10 adolescents haven't tried alcohol or tobacco;
- Teaches skills in making decisions, setting goals, and being assertive – so teenagers won't feel a need to use drugs to overcome awkwardness or to cope with stress; and
- Engages students in role-playing, discussion, and group activities to give them practice in saying "no" to their peers.

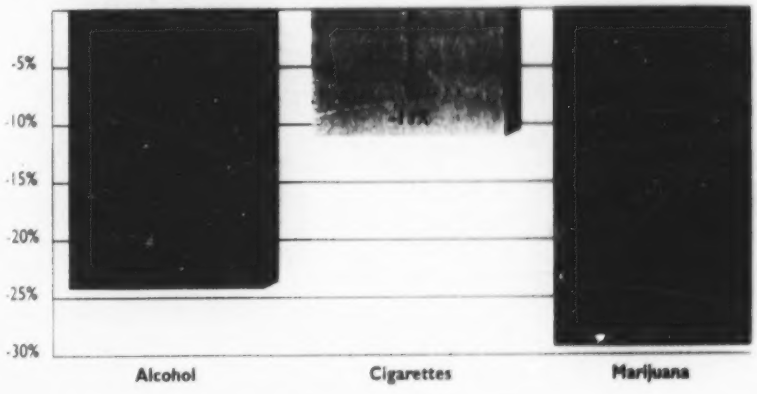
In Kansas City, the STAR program combines a 12-week curriculum with homework for parents as well as students, a local media campaign, sports events, and recreation. In addition, local leaders from civic, religious, business, government, and schools work together on community strategies to stop substance abuse and provide alternative activities.

The program is also cost-effective: a 1995 study concluded that for every $1 spent on STAR, $4.83 was saved in likely counseling and treatment costs.

Most schoolchildren these days do learn about the dangers of illegal drugs. But while effective programs exist, most school programs have either not been evaluated or have not demonstrated success. Experts say it's not a mystery why more schools don't use proven, effective antidrug programs: they take time, effort, and money away from other school programs. But communities and schools must change their priorities, if they are serious about curbing substance abuse, say Choice Two supporters.

Drug Education Drives Substance Abuse Down

Percentage drop in substance use, comparing substance use reported in 1987 by 12,000 seventh graders before participating in the I-STAR (Indiana Students Taught Awareness and Resistance) drug education program and, in 1991, four years after completing the program



Source: Institute for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, University of Southern California

Mixed Messages

Choice Two calls for America's cultural leaders to present a single, clear message about illegal drugs: that they are dangerous and socially unacceptable. Instead, the entertainment media and other cultural purveyors flirt more and more openly with illegal drugs, as the following examples suggest:

At right: Typical of the mixed messages in the media, TV's Roseanne gets upset when she finds marijuana, but then *she* rolls a joint and gets high with Dan.

■ In one episode of her TV show, Roseanne finds a bag of marijuana, wonders how to confront her kids, and then recognizes the bag as her own 20-year-old stash. She and Dan get stoned, then righteous, vowing to stay off the stuff as the laugh track kicks in.

■ In the film *Clueless*, the modernized version of Jane Austen's classic novel *Emma*, all the teenagers get stoned on marijuana at a party. While it's stupid to use drugs during the school day, one popular teen says, it's the cool thing to do at parties.

■ In alternative rock music, drug use is a standard theme of the songs and an integral part of the scene. *Newsweek* reports that least one member of each of the 15 most popular bands has admitted using illegal drugs or has been arrested for using them.

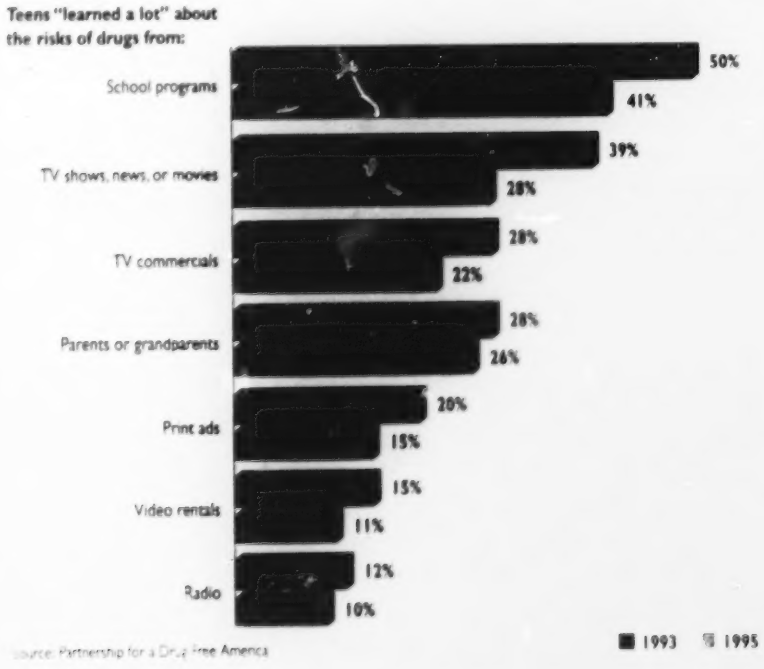
■ In the fashion industry, advertising shows a fascination with seedy surroundings and disheveled models who have the vacant, wasted look of addiction. Calvin Klein even features a heroin addict recruited from the street in advertising that promotes his unisex scent, CK One. "The '90s may be remembered as the decade when fashion served as a pusher – as pusher of what appear to be the best-dressed heroin addicts in history," fashion critic Amy Spindler wrote in *The New York Times*.

When American culture glorifies illegal drug use, that's trouble. With the average teenager listening to the radio and watching TV six hours a day, "the media may be the single most powerful force that shapes American attitudes about acceptable behavior," writes Mathea Falco, president of Drug Strategies, a nonprofit educational organization.

Choice Two calls for much greater accountability from the leaders and creators of popular culture. If we as a society can't clean up our culture, the fight against drugs is a lost cause.

Kids Are Getting Less Guidance About Illegal Drugs

Percentage of teens who report learning about the risks of drugs from various sources, according to surveys in 1993 and 1995.



Source: Partnership for a Drug-Free America

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In Support

Since we cannot significantly reduce the supply of illegal drugs, we must make a very substantial effort to reduce the demand for them by changing public attitudes.

We can't lock up everybody who experiments with illegal drugs, but we can educate them. Education is the best strategy for changing attitudes about illegal drugs; once attitudes change, behavior will follow.

Studies show that parents can be extremely effective in preventing children from using illegal drugs. Encouraging parents to use their influence will help turn around the illegal drug problem.

Some school antidrug programs have been very effective in reducing the number of children who use illegal drugs, and these proven programs can be expanded if educators and citizens make the commitment.

Studies suggest that the least expensive and most effective approach to solving the drug problem is taking steps to prevent drug abuse from starting.

Because the media have such a significant effect on people's attitudes, society must address the all-too-common portrayal of illegal drugs as chic and cool.

Advertising, in the form of public service announcements, can also influence people's attitudes about drugs and prevent their use of drugs. In one study, conducted before and after an extensive antidrug campaign by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, the number of people who said they might want to try drugs fell by 29 percent.

In Opposition

At a time when the nation's war on drugs has reduced casual drug use by more than half, Choice Two wrongly calls for a major shift in priorities and spending. We need to expand our enforcement efforts – education does not put drug criminals behind bars.

Making education a top priority would inevitably force reductions in enforcement, resulting in a likely increase in crime rates and more drug dealers around school buildings.

This approach puts a great deal of emphasis on changing people's attitudes through education. Someday, school programs may become an effective strategy in reducing drug use by children, but right now these programs are not having much effect.

How much more stigma can society heap on illegal drug use? This approach also mistakes candid public discussion for a growing tolerance of drug use. Americans need no education in the problems of drug abuse.

It's easy to blame the entertainment media for all of society's ills, but the media, for the most part, simply reflect what's going on in America. Anyway, efforts to muzzle the media would violate the right of free speech, which is fundamental to democracy.

Other opponents say that the nation is simply on the wrong track, and that our enforcement and education efforts have not lived up to expectations. The only way the nation can hope to control the problem of drug abuse is by treating it as a public health problem, not a criminal one.

For Further Reading/
Change Attitudes About Illegal Drugs

- Mathea Falco, *The Making of a Drug-Free America: Programs That Work* (New York: Times Books, 1994).
- "Making the Grade: A Guide to School Drug Prevention Programs" (Washington, D.C.: Drug Strategies, 1996).
- Paul B. Stares, *Global Habit: The Drug Problem in a Borderless World* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1996).

Treat Substance Abuse as an Illness

© Norman Y. Lono

Randi Anderson got treatment for substance abuse and is now drug-free.

When Randi Anderson was 10, a dentist prescribed the tranquilizer Valium to relieve headaches, thought to be caused by Randi grinding her teeth at night. "I really liked Valium," she recalls. By age 12, she was drinking hard liquor, and by age 16, she was snorting cocaine. Randi, who grew up on New York's Long Island, managed to graduate from college and even from New York Law School, all the while supporting her cocaine habit by stealing money from friends and from her middle-class family.

But at age 33, when she was unable to hold a job and her life was crumbling, Randi sought help from Hazelden, a nonprofit foundation that runs treatment programs around the country. After completing a five-month residential program in 1993, she was back on her feet, starting a new job counseling teenagers in foster homes. Today, drug-free for four years, Randi is still working with foster children and is going for a master's degree in social work. "I'm really fortunate," she says. "I was headed toward a life of misery and an early death."

Addiction Is an Illness

Drug addiction is a treatable illness of the brain, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Researchers there say drug abuse should be considered a chronic, relapsing disease – such as diabetes or hypertension – that requires lifelong

management. Scientists say that overuse of addictive drugs essentially short-circuits the brain, jamming neural pathways in a way that stops the brain from signaling "no more drug." Instead, it keeps signaling for "more drug." Consider the impact on laboratory animals: in one study that measured the strength of addictive behavior, monkeys pressed a lever an average of 12,800 times to obtain a single dose of cocaine, even though it was always accompanied by a painful electric shock. In another study, monkeys chose cocaine over food and water, to the point of death.

Public health officials say that abuse of illegal drugs is part of the overall problem of substance abuse, which they consider the nation's number one preventable health problem. Arresting more drug users or conducting a more extensive public information campaign – tactics advocated by Choices One and Two, respectively – would not address fundamental public health issues of drug abuse any more effectively than current drug policies.

Since chemical dependency is a treatable and preventable illness, Choice Three calls for a broad public health approach to the epidemic. In this view, government must ensure that all drug abusers have access to comprehensive drug treatment; as it is, fewer than 3 in 10 addicts receive adequate treatment, according to a 1995 report from the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Choice Three's public health approach includes reforming public programs, policies, and drug laws so that they emphasize treatment and prevention. In this view, illegal drug traffickers should continue to be sentenced to long prison terms, but Americans whose only crime is substance abuse should be treated, not punished. Incarceration, in this view, is a blunt and costly instrument for containing an epidemic of drug abuse.

To increase public confidence and compliance with drug regulations, a public health agency like the U.S. Food and Drug Administration should have primary authority for regulating illegal drugs. Drug policy would then be driven more by science than by political expediency, as it often is today, in this view. Research-based drug policies, Choice Three supporters assert, would open the way for doctors to prescribe some currently illegal drugs for medicinal purposes – along the lines of the law Arizona voters passed in 1996. A science-based policy, in this view, would also lead to reclassifying marijuana as a nonaddictive drug with less harmful effects than alcohol or tobacco. A strategy for regulating marijuana sales to adults, moreover, would also be the best way to reduce sales to minors, in this view.

Drug traffickers should be sentenced to long prison terms, but Americans whose only crime is substance abuse should be treated, not punished.

Choice Three also calls for expanding prevention programs because so many people, especially the poor, use drugs to try to escape their miseries. In particular, families that suffer from domestic violence or joblessness face a high risk of drug abuse. Expanded prevention programs would reach out to these families and provide social services, job training and, as a last resort, job placement in public works projects. Having a job, and the stability and self-esteem that come with it, is one of the most effective preventions for drug use, according to a 1989 study published in the *American Journal of Alcohol and Drug Abuse*.

A San Antonio jobs program helped Cynthia Scott get off welfare and become a nurse. Such social programs do double service as drug prevention programs.

What Can Be Done

Supporters of Choice Three generally favor the following measures:

- Refocus public policies and drug laws so that their mission is to help people who abuse drugs or are at risk of abusing them.
- Make comprehensive drug treatment available to all substance abusers.
- Expand prevention programs, including job training programs, that address the social and economic reasons many people turn to drugs.
- Authorize a public health agency like the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to regulate illegal drugs. Among other things, this research-based approach would permit the medicinal use of some illegal drugs in treatment programs, and would permit marijuana – a nonaddictive drug that many researchers consider less harmful than alcohol – to be sold to adults in pharmacies or regulated shops.
- Eliminate criminal penalties for the personal use of all drugs.
- Concentrate enforcement efforts against illegal drug traffickers, especially dealers who sell to minors.

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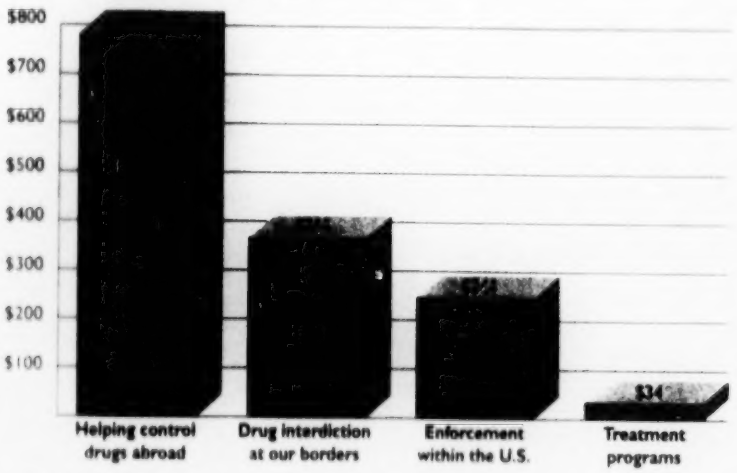
Treatment Is the Least Costly Way to Reduce Drug Use

Additional spending required to achieve a 1% reduction in cocaine use by employing various strategies, in millions of dollars per year



Source: Rand Corporation, 1994

Treatment Works

Like most people who become dependent on drugs, Randi Anderson wasn't able to stop using drugs on her own even though she hated what they did to her and her family. But now, following treatment, she's a recovering addict with a new life in social work. Drug addiction is a treatable disease, and there are many types of successful treatment programs, ranging from residential care to drug replacement therapy, which involves weaning addicts away from heroin with daily doses of methadone, a non-euphoric narcotic. A hallmark of successful programs, say experts, is that they provide comprehensive medical, psychological, and social services along with follow-up care and support.

Study after study demonstrates that most people can be treated successfully and that treatment is a bargain compared to other alternatives. Just two findings:

- Heroin use declined by 79 percent among addicts in a comprehensive methadone treatment program studied in 1993 by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania. From the first day of treatment, methadone programs proved effective in reducing illegal drug use and criminal activity. The National Academy of Science recommends expanding methadone treatment, which is currently available to fewer than one in five heroin addicts.

- A 1994 study in California concludes that every $1 invested in comprehensive drug treatment programs saves $7 in future costs of crime and incarceration. Yet government statistics indicate that more than half of the nation's hardcore drug users cannot obtain treatment. And even though most prison inmates have drug problems, the government says only about one in six receives any kind of drug treatment, and only 1 in 50 participates in comprehensive programs proven effective in reducing crime and drug addiction.

Reform Drug Laws

Though U.S. drug laws are well-intended, they are causing more harm than the drugs themselves, in this view. Consider just a few consequences of treating the use of some drugs as a crime:

- When law enforcement reduces the supply of illegal drugs, drug prices automatically rise, forcing addicts to commit more crimes to support their habits, according to a National Academy of Sciences study.

- Criminal gangs in the drug business are destroying American communities. About 20

Suzanne DeChillo/NYT Pictures

Drug treatment programs are effective, and greatly needed in prisons, where most inmates have drug problems.

What's the Drug Crime? Mostly Possession

Type of drug offense, as a percentage of all drug-related arrests, 1994

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation

percent of nation's homicides are related to dealers' turf battles, often affecting innocent people who get caught in the cross fire.

- Enforcement and incarceration cost American taxpayers about $10 billion a year.
- Banning drugs, instead of regulating their safety and sale by prescription, creates an environment where the AIDS epidemic flourishes. One out of three AIDS cases is now linked to the sharing of infected needles.
- Police arrest 700,000 people annually for the possession of drugs, mostly marijuana. One in six Federal inmates is serving time for having broken drug possession laws.

Choice Three calls for focusing enforcement efforts on illegal drug dealers, removing criminal penalties for illegal drug possession, and regulating the medicinal use of some illegal drugs as well as permitting the sale of marijuana to adults. If this sounds radical, consider that Holland has taken this approach for 20 years, and its crime and drug use rates have dropped dramatically, to levels that represent small fractions of comparable U.S. rates.

In addition to expanding drug treatment, the Dutch government permits doctors to prescribe illegal drugs to patients in treatment. And as part of an effort to reduce adolescent drug use, the government has licensed 2,000 coffee shops to sell small amounts of marijuana to adults. Marijuana use has been slowly rising, but the Dutch see it as a lesser evil than alcohol – noting that many American researchers consistently find that problematic alcohol use, not marijuana use, is the most common stepping-stone to drugs like heroin and cocaine.

"For us, this is normal behavior," Frits Rüter, a criminologist at the University of Amsterdam, told *Time* magazine in 1996. "We don't solve a problem by making it taboo and pushing it underground. Our traditional enemy is water. We know you can't stop it from rising; you have to channel it."

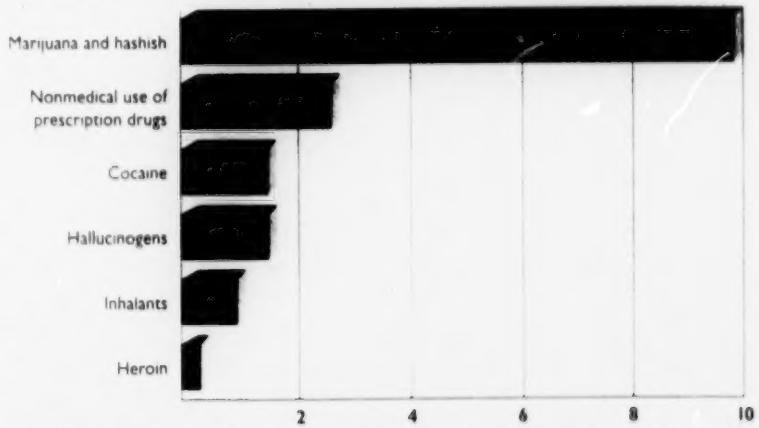
Prevention Is the Best Policy

Research links drug abuse to a number of social problems, ranging from teenage pregnancy to spousal abuse and joblessness. One study, for example, reports that having a job is one of the best preventions for drug use – yet joblessness among men of employable age is itself at epidemic levels: 33.2 percent of blacks, 27.9 percent of Hispanics, and 18.4 percent of whites are either unemployed or have given up looking for work, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in 1995.

Choice Three calls for an expansion of public and private programs that reach out to troubled families at risk of drug abuse. In San Antonio, for instance, the closing of a Levi's factory and the layoff of 1,000 workers in 1990 created the kind of crisis that typically leads to substance abuse, drug experts say. But business, community, and political leaders teamed up to develop a comprehensive program to provide unemployed people with up to 17 months of counseling and job training for specific, decent-paying jobs in the city. About the program, one worker said, "There was an opportunity at a time I needed a lifeline."

Substance Abuse: Prescription drugs and illegal drugs

Estimated number of people over 12 who reported using various drugs in the previous month, in millions, 1995



Source: Department of Health and Human Services, National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, 1995

In Support

It's time to recognize that substance abuse is primarily a public health problem, not a criminal issue or a matter of public ignorance.

Chemical dependency is a chronic but treatable disease. Consequently, treatment should be expanded.

Eliminating criminal penalties for using drugs would end the hypocrisy of allowing 2.6 million people to abuse prescription drugs annually while threatening to jail the 12.8 million people who abuse illegal drugs. It also makes no sense to permit a drug like alcohol but not marijuana, which many researchers say is less harmful.

Regulating the sale of illegal drugs through prescription would make them safer, and restrict drug use by minors.

Crime rates would decline with this approach. First, the violence of the drug trade would diminish as drugs become available by prescription and as marijuana sales to adults are permitted in licensed shops. Second, this approach would reduce drug prices and, thus, reduce crime by addicts who steal to support their habits.

Even the most expensive drug treatment programs pay for themselves by reducing crime and the costs of lost productivity and healthcare, according to a 1990 study by the National Academy of Sciences.

If we don't help prison inmates recover from drug addiction, they will only cause more trouble when they are released.

The nation's drug problem is a symptom of deeper social problems. Expanding prevention programs for families at risk of domestic violence, joblessness, and other crises would not only address these social problems but also reduce drug abuse.

In Opposition

Treatment programs are useful, but are not the whole answer to the drug problem. Many treatment programs have low success rates because so many people relapse into drug use.

Medicalizing drug abuse would have the unintended effect of relieving people of responsibility for their actions. Problems like drug abuse or illegitimate births do not go away by renaming them or shifting blame for them.

With drugs more accessible, less expensive, and lacking stigma, many more people would use them.

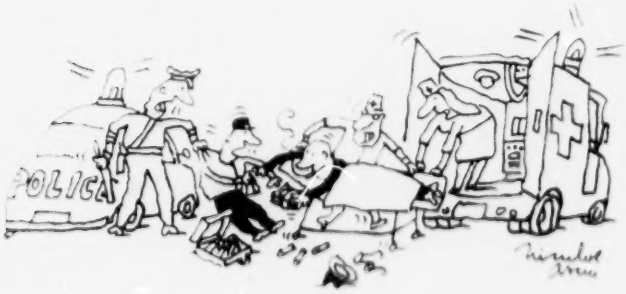
Who wants to live in a country where it would be legal to use heroin and crack cocaine, even under a doctor's care? Laws convey shared social norms, and legalizing drug use would condone destructive habits.

Drug abuse is not a victimless crime. Drug users, for example, give birth to drug-damaged babies and cause accidents on the roads.

Is it possible to make drugs legal for adults, but keep them away from children? Not judging from our experience with cigarettes or alcohol.

Increased drug use would bring increased crime. Criminals commit six times as many homicides, four times as many assaults, and almost one-and-a-half times as many robberies under the influence of drugs as they commit in order to get money to buy drugs, according to the U.S. Department of Justice.

This approach says other social problems lead to drug abuse. If so, legalizing drugs will only make things worse, since social problems won't disappear overnight.



For Further Reading /
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- Milton Friedman and Thomas S. Szasz, *On Liberty and Drugs: Essays on the Free Market and Prohibition* (Washington, D.C.: The Drug Policy Foundation Press, 1992).
- Ethan A. Nadelmann, lead author, "The Harm Reduction Approach to Drug Control: International Progress," The Lindesmith Center, New York (June 1995).

Renovating Public Policy

In a way, remaking public policy is like renovating an old kitchen: both projects always seem to require far more time and money than we ever thought was possible. Looking back at kitchen and policy renovations, it's usually clear that even Albert Einstein could not have predicted the disaster lurking behind a kitchen wall or a government program; and it's usually just as clear that a bit more comparison shopping, planning, and just plain talking would have prevented some unpleasant surprises and costs.

This issue book presents three general approaches to renovating the nation's drug policies. Each approach has its cadre of advocates and architects claiming their approach addresses the nation's drug problem most effectively. Each approach would certainly generate predictable and unpredictable costs, tradeoffs, and risks. In comparing the three approaches, it may help to consider the following discussion points:

■ **How do the choices define the drug problem?** Choice One says it's a global crime problem, ruining communities and spawning violence and addiction. Choice Two considers it a cultural problem, with schools and parents insufficiently effective in teaching children not to use drugs, while drugs are glamorized in film, fashion, and TV. Choice Three claims it's primarily a public health problem involving a treatable disease, which festers because of inadequate treatment.

■ **What can be done?** Choice One calls for strengthening laws and stepping up enforcement; Choice Two calls for a moral campaign, including educational programs and antidrug messages throughout popular culture; Choice Three calls for expanding treatment and prevention programs as well as eliminating criminal penalties for personal drug use.

■ **What role should the government play?** In Choice One, the government expands both its war on drugs and its support for citizen involvement, especially in community antidrug campaigns. In Choice Two, government maintains current enforcement activities, and government and citizens work more closely together to clarify and promote antidrug messages in schools and the entertainment media. Choice Three shifts government priorities away from enforcement and toward treatment and prevention programs, including those that expand job training opportunities.

■ **What's an important risk posed by each choice?** Choice One, which advocates an aggressive effort to stop the flow of drugs into this country, could result in extensive military actions abroad. Choice Two, which argues that society must change peoples' attitudes about drugs before their behaviors will change, could take a long time to turn around the drug problem. Choice Three, which calls for eliminating criminal penalties for drug use, could encourage more people to experiment with drugs.

■ **What are some likely tradeoffs?** Choice One, in calling for expanding enforcement at all levels, would substantially increase the cost of fighting drugs. Choice Two, in concentrating on preventive programs to deter drug use, offers fewer answers for dealing with existing drug problems. Choice Three, in legalizing personal drug use, would likely lead to more drug abuse among the most vulnerable people, especially the poor, who turn to drugs as an escape from hopelessness.

■ **Could we combine elements of the three choices?** The choices overlap in some ways, and readers might want to craft a fourth choice that, say, calls for increased enforcement, public education efforts, and treatment. But that's not practical when resources are limited, and priorities must be set. Also, each choice leads the nation in a very different direction – consider that Choice One calls for stronger criminal laws and Choice Three calls for removing all criminal penalties for drug use.

Comparing the Choices

Teenage drug use is rising, and half of Americans either have a drug problem or know someone who does. More and more Americans worry about drug-ruined lives and drug-related crime in their communities. What approach to the issue should the nation take? To stimulate discussions, the three approaches described in this issue book are summarized and compared on these pages.

Choice 1

Step Up Enforcement to Finish the Job

We've already reduced casual drug use by half. To win the war, we must increase enforcement and stop tolerating illegal drugs in schools, workplaces, and communities.

What Can Be Done?

- Substantially increase funding for enforcement efforts at all levels of government.
- Expand drug searches in schools and drug testing in the workplace.
- Support citizen efforts to eliminate drugs from their communities.

In Support

- Illegal drugs are destroying the country and can't be tolerated.
- We've made much progress in 20 years, but we must expand enforcement efforts to win the war.
- School searches, random drug testing, and community antidrug campaigns are all proven strategies to combat illegal drugs.

In Opposition

- This is a wasteful expansion of a failing policy.
- Most drug-related crimes merely involve the possession of drugs – often marijuana, a nonaddictive drug that many researchers consider safer than alcohol.
- Random drug searches and drug tests violate people's privacy.

A Likely Tradeoff

- In calling for more enforcement at all levels, this approach would substantially increase the cost of fighting drugs.

Choice 2

Change Attitudes About Illegal Drugs

Drug laws are difficult to enforce, because many people either think drugs are safe or don't care. Only changing public attitudes about drugs will change behavior.

What Can Be Done?

- Help and encourage parents to frequently discuss the problems of illegal drugs with their children.
- Expand proven drug education programs in schools.
- Insist that the entertainment media affirm, rather than undermine, antidrug messages.

In Support

- Having failed to reduce the supply of drugs, we must increase efforts to reduce the demand.
- We can't lock up every adult and child who tries drugs – but we can educate them.
- Because the media sets trends, it must join the fight against drugs instead of undermining it.

In Opposition

- This approach calls for fixing a national drug strategy that isn't broken.
- Educational programs overall demonstrate relatively little success in reducing drug use.
- The entertainment media merely reflect society and social trends, and should not be muzzled.

A Likely Tradeoff

- By focusing on preventive programs to deter drug use, this approach offers few answers for existing drug problems.

Choice 3

Treat Substance Abuse as an Illness

Drug abuse is a treatable illness, not a crime. A broad public health approach that includes regulating drug use provides the best prospects for managing this epidemic.

What Can Be Done?

- Make comprehensive drug treatment available to all substance abusers.
- Eliminate criminal penalties for personal drug use. Focus enforcement on drug traffickers.
- Deter drug abuse by attacking its root causes. Expand prevention programs, including childcare and job training.

In Support

- Drug abuse is a sickness, an illness that responds to treatment, not punishment.
- Decriminalizing drug use would destroy the criminal market for drugs and decrease the amount of drug-related crime.
- Effective programs that prevent drug abuse are much less costly than coping with drug problems as they arise.

In Opposition

- Who wants to live in a country where it's legal to use crack cocaine, even under a doctor's care?
- Legalizing drug use would encourage more adults to use drugs – and make it more difficult to restrict teenage drug use.
- Increased drug use would bring more crime.

A Likely Tradeoff

- Legalizing drugs could lead to a disproportionate increase in drug abuse among poor people, who have more reasons to use drugs as an escape.

What Are the National Issues Forums?

Want to start a forum?

Forums are initiated at the local level by civic and educational organizations. For information about starting a forum and using our materials, write the NIF Institute, P.O. Box 75306, Washington, D.C. 20013-5306, or phone 800-433-7834.

National Issues Forums bring together citizens around the nation to discuss challenging social and political issues of the day. They have addressed issues such as the economy, education, healthcare, foreign affairs, poverty, and crime.

Thousands of civic, service, and religious organizations, as well as libraries, high schools, and colleges, have sponsored forums. The sponsoring organizations select topics from among each year's most pressing public concerns, then design and coordinate their own forum programs, which are held through the fall, winter, and spring.

A different kind of discussion

No two forums are alike. They range from small study circles to large gatherings modeled after town meetings, but all are different from everyday conversations and adversarial debates.

Since forums seek to increase understanding of complicated issues, participants need not start out with a close knowledge of an issue. Forum organizers distribute issue books such as this one, featuring a nonpartisan overview of an issue and a choice of several public responses. By presenting each issue in a nonpartisan way, forums encourage participants to take a fresh look at the issues and at their own convictions.

In the forums, participants share their opinions, their concerns, and their knowledge. With the help of moderators and the issue books, participants weigh several possible ways for society to address a problem. They analyze each choice, the arguments for and against it, and the tradeoffs and other implications of the choice. Moderators encourage participants, as they gravitate to one option or another, to examine their basic values as individuals and as community members.

The common ground

Forums enrich participants' thinking on public issues. Participants confront each issue head-on, make an informed decision about how to address it, and come to terms with the likely consequences of their choices. In this deliberative process, participants often accept choices that are not entirely consistent with their individual wishes and that impose costs they had not initially considered. This happens because the forum process helps people see issues from different points of view; participants use discussion to discover, not persuade or advocate. The best deliberative forums can help participants move toward shared, stable, well-informed public judgments about important issues.

Participants may hold sharply different opinions and beliefs, but in the forums they discuss their attitudes, concerns, and convictions about each issue and, as a group, seek to resolve their conflicting priorities and principles. In this way, participants move from making individual choices to making choices as a public – the kind of choices from which accepted, even shared action may result.

Building community through public deliberation

In a democracy, citizens must come together to find answers they can all live with – while acknowledging that individuals have differing opinions. Forums help people find the areas where their interests and goals overlap. This allows a public voice to emerge that can give direction to public policy.

The forums are nonpartisan and do not advocate a particular solution to any public issue, nor should they be confused with referenda or public opinion polls. Rather, the forums enable diverse groups of Americans to determine together what direction they want policy to take, what kinds of action and legislation they favor, and what, for their common good, they oppose.

From agreement to action

Forums can lead to several kinds of public action. Generally, a public voice emerges in the results of the forums, and that helps set the government's compass, since forum results are shared with elected officials each year. Also, as a result of attending forums, individuals and groups themselves may decide to take action individually or in association with others to help remedy a public problem, taking actions that citizens can take outside of government.

Illegal Drugs

What Should We Do Now?

One of the reasons people participate in the National Issues Forums is that they want leaders to know how they feel about the issues. So that we can present your thoughts and feelings about the issue, we'd like you to fill out this ballot before you attend forum meetings (or before you read this book, if you buy it elsewhere), and to fill out a second ballot after the forum (or after you've read the material). Before answering any of the questions, make up a three-digit number and write it in the box below.

The moderator of your local forum will ask you to hand in this ballot at the end of the session. If you are not attending a forum, send the completed ballot to the National Issues Forums, 100 Commons Road, Dayton , Ohio 45459-2777.

☐ **Fill in your three-digit number here.**

1. Here is a list of principles on which proposals to fight drug abuse might be based. How important do you think each is?

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not at all important	Not sure
a. Tougher punishment will discourage people from using and selling drugs.	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. We should pressure the media to stop glamorizing drug use.	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. We should focus on reducing the demand for drugs rather than trying to stop the supply.	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Drug abuse is an illness to be treated, rather than a crime to be punished.	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. The war on drugs should focus on social problems, such as joblessness, that lead to drug abuse.	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. We should punish countries that export drugs to the U.S.	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. Look at the list in Question #1 again. How strongly is each principle reflected in what we're actually doing today?

	Strongly	Somewhat strongly	Not at all	Not sure
a. Tougher punishment will discourage people from using and selling drugs.	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. We should pressure the media to stop glamorizing drug use.	☐	☐	☐	☐
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f. We should punish countries that export drugs to the U.S.	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. Are there any other principles that you think should guide public policy on illegal drugs? Please explain.

_____

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_____

4. How concerned are you about the following?

	Very concerned	Somewhat concerned	Not at all concerned	Not sure
a. Too much tolerance for the use of some drugs, such as marijuana.	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Too few drug abuse treatment and prevention programs.	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Locker searches might violate students' rights.	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Laws for punishing drug dealers are not tough enough.	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. The costs to the taxpayer for fighting the war on drugs are too high.	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. It's too easy for drugs to come across our borders.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Continued on next page

5. Do you have any other concerns about public policy in this area? Please explain.

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6. How do you feel about these approaches to the problem of illegal drugs?	Favor	Oppose	Not sure
a. Drug testing should be required in the workplace, EVEN IF it means people must give up some of their privacy rights.	☐	☐	☐
b. We should spend more on school antidrug programs, EVEN IF they have not had much success so far.	☐	☐	☐
c. We should legalize drug use, EVEN IF more people might then use them.	☐	☐	☐

7. Which statement best describes how you feel? (Please choose only one answer.)
   - a. I am not at all certain what our public policy on fighting illegal drugs should be. ☐
   - b. I have a general sense of what our public policy on fighting illegal drugs should be. ☐
   - c. I have a clear, definite idea of what should be done. ☐

8. Are you male or female? ☐ Male ☐ Female

9. How much schooling have you completed?

   ☐ Less than 6th grade ☐ 6th-8th grade ☐ Some high school ☐ High school graduate

   ☐ Some college ☐ College graduate ☐ Graduate school

10. Are you:

    ☐ White ☐ African-American ☐ Hispanic

    ☐ Asian-American ☐ Other (specify)

11. How old are you?

    ☐ 17 or younger ☐ 18-29 ☐ 30-49

    ☐ 50-64 ☐ 65 or older

12. Have you attended an NIF forum before? ☐ Yes ☐ No

13. If you answered "yes" to #12, how many forums have you attended?

    ☐ 1-3 ☐ 4 or more ☐ Not sure

14. Do you live in the:

    ☐ Northeast ☐ South ☐ Midwest

    ☐ West ☐ Southwest ☐ Other

15. What is your ZIP CODE?_____

Illegal Drugs

What Should We Do Now?

Now that you've had a chance to read the book or attend a forum discussion, we'd like to know what you think about this issue. Your opinions, along with those of thousands of others who participated in this year's forums, will be reflected in a summary report prepared for participants as well as elected officials and policymakers working on this problem. Since we're interested in whether you have changed your mind about certain aspects of this issue, the questions are the same as those you answered earlier. Before answering the questions, please write in the box below the same three-digit number you used for the Pre-Forum Ballot.

Please hand this ballot to the forum leader at the end of the session, or mail it to: The National Issues Forums, 100 Commons Road, Dayton, Ohio 45459-2777.

☐ **Fill in your three-digit number here.**

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d. Drug abuse is an illness to be treated, rather than a crime to be punished.	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. The war on drugs should focus on social problems, such as joblessness, that lead to drug abuse.	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. We should punish countries that export drugs to the U.S.	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. Look at the list in Question #1 again. How strongly is each principle reflected in what we're actually doing today?	Strongly	Somewhat strongly	Not at all	Not sure
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f. We should punish countries that export drugs to the U.S.	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. Are there any other principles that you think should guide public policy on illegal drugs? Please explain.

4. How concerned are you about the following?	Very concerned	Somewhat concerned	Not at all concerned	Not sure
a. Too much tolerance for the use of some drugs, such as marijuana.	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Too few drug abuse treatment and prevention programs.	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Locker searches might violate students' rights.	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Laws for punishing drug dealers are not tough enough.	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. The costs to the taxpayer for fighting the war on drugs are too high.	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. It's too easy for drugs to come across our borders.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Continued on next page

5. Do you have any other concerns about public policy in this area? Please explain.

_____

_____

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6. How do you feel about these approaches to the problem of illegal drugs?	Favor	Oppose	Not sure
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7. Which statement best describes how you feel? (Please choose only one answer.)

a. I am not at all certain what our public policy on fighting illegal drugs should be. ☐

b. I have a general sense of what our public policy on fighting illegal drugs should be. ☐

c. I have a clear, definite idea of what should be done. ☐

8. If you answered "c" to Question 7, please tell us below what you think our public policy should be.

_____

_____

_____

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9. What is your ZIP CODE?_____

For the National Issues Forums

Public Agenda

Kettering Foundation

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Acknowledgments

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Design

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